



HOWARD CAMPBELL, Evansville amateur radio operator, may have heard signals from Russia's moon probe rocket.

Ham Tunes In

LUNA 1 3RD STAGE FREQUENCIES.

Space Signals

1959

While Sunday Courier and Press reporters listened over the phone, an Evansville ham radio operator may have intercepted signals from Russia's moon rocket as it sped through space Saturday afternoon.

Early stories about the signals convinced most hams in this area there was no use trying to catch the telephone dial tone sound, because transmitters were broadcasting on a frequency high above amateur bands, at 183.6 megacycles.

But later information told of broadcasts at 19.997 and 19.997 megacycles, well within the range of many local operators.

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When informed that the signals might be audible, Campbell said, "Well, I've been talking to South Africa, but if you have a minute, we'll just tune in."

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First attempts brought an unusual sound, which, if the imagination were stretched, could be like the telephone dial tone sound which wire stories say the signal resembles.

"Well, I can't say for sure that's it, but it does sound like something which could come from space," Campbell said. He added that he has heard signals from all Russian satellites which broadcast on the ham bands, and had a tape recording of Sputnik I.

"Tell you what I'll do," Campbell said, "I'll toss a frequency meter on, so we know for sure we are right on the 19.9 band. I'll call you back."

He called about 4:30 p.m., saying, "There she is." With that, reporters and an editor grabbed extension phones and all listened to the sound.

Wavering Sound

Campbell explained that many commercial stations use the 19.9 frequency, and that was what was happening at the time. Someone was sending a code, which was the prominent noise. But in the background was a wavering, unsteady sound, which came and faded, and the amateur operator said "This sound could definitely be from the rocket."

Later Campbell said there was no way of knowing for certain if the signal came from Russia's moon rocket.

Campbell, who has talked with hams in 90 nations, on all six continents, and in the 49 states, has W9JFJ for call letters. He said last July he spoke with a ham in Riga, Latvia, who said he worked for an official Russian satellite tracking station. He later received the man's card from the Russian dominated country.